



#VOW2DISCUSS CAREGIVER CONVERSATION GUIDE

This is the 1st in a series of guides for conversations between parents, guardians, advocates, and their children focused on helping children explore their racial identity and develop cultural pride. If you are skeptical about **THE NECESSITY** of such conversations skip down to the FAQ section before continuing to read.

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Steps to
Wise
Words

1) REFLECT 2) TALK 3) ACT

REFLECT Before you sit down with your child, please take some time to reflect and define your own views. The idea is to essentially fill your child with so many positive thoughts about Black identity that there will be no room for negative ones. Here are some helpful tips:

- a) Think of 5 things that are great about being Black.
- b) Think of 5 things that every Black person should know.
- c) Think of the questions your child might ask you during the conversation and prepare thoughtful answers.
- d) Find a resistance, protest, or advocacy effort to join. Or, you can find ways to resist racially biased systems in powerful ways as an individual. The purpose of your advocacy is to show your child the sincerity in your words, through action.
- e) Review all of this with another parent, family member, or friend you trust.

Need ideas? See the end of the FAQs for helpful hints and tips.

TALK

Have a Courageous Conversation of Wise Words

- a) Using an interesting idea (Did you know the melanin that gives your skin color protects you from the sun?) or an open-ended question to pull your child into the conversation (e.g., How do you feel about being Black?).
 - b) Share with your child the 5 things that are great about being Black, ask them and see if they have anything to add to the list. Don't be surprised or concerned if they struggle to add to the list. This racial identity development and confidence takes time and experience, which you are building through this process.
 - c) Get your child's thoughts on the 5 things they think every Black person should have or know, build on their response with your thoughts.
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ACT

Show & share your courageous actions for equality with your child

- a) Actively engage in a protest/resistance event that is most appropriate for your values and share the event with your child either by telling them about it or bringing them along if it makes sense. We can think of no better way to show your child #AllBlackLivesMatter than by pouring into them and their future by participating in protests and actions that are fighting for a better future for them.
- b) Ask your child what they would like to do to create a racially equitable, and just tomorrow.

FAQs

Do I have to participate in some sort of political resistance or advocacy work?

We are not in the business of telling anybody what to do. We are suggesting that participation in the work of creating a better future for Black people no matter how small or large is important. It's important for 2 reasons: 1) It means your words are now backed up with action, you will be able to say to your child be proud of your skin color and heritage AND be proud because I'm fighting for you to have a better future. 2) We don't live in a post-racial, meritocratic, or racially just society we should all be working to change that for future generations, just like we should protect the planet for them.

What are examples of 5 things that Black people can be proud of?

This is by no means an exhaustive or definite list, just some of our suggestions.

- African Ancestry Lineage—the world's oldest people and brilliant scientists, engineers, and farmers, artists, etc.
- Strong Emphasis on Family: Right after the abolishment of slavery when families were broken up, former slaves would travel all over the country in attempt to reunite their family. Today we see this strong emphasis on family unity, as it is common for African American families regularly to engage in large family reunions bringing together family from near and far.
- History of overcoming oppression, for example, civil rights movement, Haitian Slave revolt, Ferguson and Eric Garner protests.
- Striving for excellence in education: Even when Blacks were denied formal education and forbidden to read many would secretly educate themselves and became scholars. There is a strong history of Blacks overcoming numerous barriers in order to become thought leaders and innovators. Many times even risking their lives to achieve their goals.
- Innovation in the form Art: Black folks have created countless art forms across the visual, auditory, and performance fields. These include Capoeira, wood carving, painting, architecture, jazz, blues, hip-hop, and many others.

COMING SOON our Top 5 list of Facebook Pages Spreading Positive Black Images

FAQs



Why should I have a conversation related to race with my child?

In this first guide, as a first step we are advocating what researcher Howard Stevenson calls [Cultural Pride Reinforcement \(CPR\)](#). CPR focuses on highlighting the positives of children's cultural/racial background. This promotes your child's identity growth related to their Blackness also called racial identity development. Importantly this identity growth helps protect Black children from experiences with racism that devalue their self-worth and esteem. Perhaps most important there is evidence that children that get CPR have better mental health and grades. In future guides we will discuss talking to children about racism, coping with it, and most importantly encouraging them to disrupt it.

How frequently should I have these conversations?

We suggest repeating these steps as often as possible! Think of all the negative messages Black children are exposed to about who they are. These conversations are meant to counteract and replace those negative messages with positive ones, so repeat often!

What if my kids are too young to understand?

[Research](#) shows most children understand race and racialized issues well before they can articulate it. Therefore, it's important to address these issues head-on as many children need their parents to help them cope with what they can't fully understand. They also need help to ensure they don't [unknowingly internalize negative ideas about people of their own race](#). Ultimately, with this hesitancy you might only be protecting your little one from what could be called explicit innocence because there are studies that show little ones start to internalize negative ideas about being Black at an early age (cite). Much like those commercials that say it's never too soon to talk to your children about drunk driving, the same should be said about talking to them about race.

Are issues of race even relevant to this new generation?

Hopefully a quick Google search for the following: Ferguson, Tamir Rice, Reinisha McBride, microaggressions, I Too Am Harvard, or Eric Garner, provides evidence to show race is an issue that our youngest generation will have to face and overtake.

FAQs



What are some ideas for 5 things you think your child should know about being Black?

Again, no prescriptions or order here, just suggestions.

- You can be and do whatever makes you happy, don't allow people to narrowly frame what it means to be Black. Black people have literally done everything.
- Keep 5 Black role models. As the awesome ["Because Of Them We Can" campaign](#) exclaims, you cannot become what you cannot see. Youth should be able to see their future selves in people they know of--ranging from family members, to civil rights leaders, to influential leaders in Africa and the diaspora.
- Black history does not start at Slavery and it didn't stop with the Civil Rights Movement. There are amazing young Black folks doing amazing things now and we've been doing this since the beginning of humanity. The blood, sweat and tears of an amazing people are within you, your destiny is to be the best of what they have been and are.
- There will be obstacles to your success, but through the strength of your community and your village you will achieve success. Sometimes this may mean you have to separate how some people think of you based on your skin color and the pride that you have because of your skin color.
- You have an obligation to your community and village. Many folks will connect negative things to Black people sometimes in sly and difficult to pinpoint ways. Work to be aware of when folks are falsely suggesting Black people are inherently poor, hood, or ratchet. Your obligation begins with not accepting these lies and working to end the systemic issues (not created by Black folks) of reduced access to health care, poor school systems and over-policing that lead to the challenges Black people disproportionately face.

What are some social-justice causes that I can join or support?

You don't have to join an effort but some are below. Also consider the following resistance efforts: Buying Black as much as possible, not supporting organizations that have histories of treating people of color poorly, or speaking against racially biased suspension practices at your next local school board meeting.

[Dream Defenders](#)- Watch and support the [Demands](#) of the Dream Defenders

[Black Youth Project 100](#)- Take the [BYP Pledge](#) to work with Black youth against injustice

[BlackLivesMatter](#)- [Support the demands](#) of the #BlackLivesMatter movement

COMING SOON our Top 20 ways to take action for Equality